

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

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INTERVIEW WITH VICTOR MARCHETTI

JOHN WINGATE: To today's guest, this first question --do you believe in spies and the spy system?

VICTOR MARCHETTI: Yes, I do. As long as we have nations, individual nations, some of which are less than trustworthy, it behooves the United States to have an organization which can acquire secret information for the use of the policy makers and the planners. when making certain key decisions.

WINGATE: This is a former CIA officer, Victor Marchetti. When you say "nations," we have to watch. What countries do you mean?

MARCHETTI: Well, in particular I'm thinking of nations like the Soviet Union and Communist China, those which are at loggerheads with us over international issues. And nations which have a proven record of being perfectly capable of resorting to a great deal of trickery to achieve their ends.

WINGATE: Victor Marchetti, it's been announced, as you know, that President Nixon will go to Peking to meet with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai. Would the CIA naturally be involved in advance preparations for such a trip?

MARCHETTI: Yes, they would.

WINGATE: To what extent?

MARCHETTI: I think they would be providing a great deal of Intelligence information to the President and his staff on what they know about the status of the health and mentality of Chou En-lai, of the other...

WINGATE: Not to speak of Chairman Mao.

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MARCHETTI: As well as Chairman Mao. As well as the other leaders. They would provide him with all the information they possibly could on the political situation, economic situation, largely background-type information because this is a denied area, as you know, no Americans having been in there except in the very recent past for I guess well over a decade now.

WINGATE: Now who would assemble, collate this information, and take the dossier to President Nixon?

MARCHETTI: It would be done in a rather large staff fashion. Various elements of the CIA would be assigned to work in their fields of expertise. The geographers, the economists, the scientists, the medical types, for example, would all prepare the necessary reports. These would all be pulled together at the top of the CIA and then fed to the proper staff men for the President. The very best reports and the essence of the important reports would be passed on, of course, to Henry Kissinger so that he can give the President his full support.

WINGATE: What do you think the Chinese spies are doing all this time?

MARCHETTI: They're having a good time, because it's very easy to spy against the United States.

WINGATE: What? As a former CIA man you say it's very easy to spy against us?

MARCHETTI: Of course it is. In the first place, we do not have the restrictions on individuals and on freedom of action that exist in a country like China. It would be very easy for the Chinese to wander around, if not themselves, through agents in Washington attending cocktail parties, wandering into all sorts of information. One can walk into the Pentagon and wander around and learn a great deal. This is why the Soviets have always had much more success in their clandestine operations than the US.

WINGATE: Do you suspect that some, a bare few, of the members of the Chinese community in New York, in San Francisco, and in Boston, where there's a large one, may feed back valuable information?

MARCHETTI: Yes. I think it would be foolish not to assume that there are some Chinese-Americans, as well as perhaps Anglo-Saxon Americans who are working for foreign powers.

WINGATE: Victor Marchetti was for fourteen years with the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington. Three of those years he was in what's called the executive suite, and reported from

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time to time to the director of the CIA. But he quit it. Yet, as you've heard him say clearly, he favors the spy system, believes that with Russia and China we need an Intelligence system. So what's the rub? Why did you quit it?

MARCHETTI: Well, I think that the Intelligence community generally speaking is out of step with the times. The CIA and the other agencies -- the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency -- are all thinking more or less still in terms of the cold war period of the fifties. In fact, there are some people high up in these organizations -- you must remember that the leaders of these organization cut their spy teeth during the OSS days.

WINGATE: In World War II.

MARCHETTI: In World War II, yes. These men grew up and rose to positions of prominence during the cold war. They are now at the top of the various agencies. It's difficult for them to be more flexible now in this modern, complex world. It is also difficult for them to no longer believe in the American imperium (?) that existed after World War II, where the United States was the most powerful and influential world (?). As a result, a lot of these individuals, with the encouragement and support of certain leading Congressmen, Senators, administration officials, and the Eastern establishment, just cannot keep from trying to influence events all over the world. As you know, we have...

WINGATE: Tell me how.

MARCHETTI: The best example, current example, is Laos. Here is a government that has very little popular support, that is falling apart by the seams and has been for a decade now. It neighbors a government of similar people which is fighting against it, and yet the CIA -- although as far as I can see Laos is worth nothing, nothing strategically, and it's not worth anything economically unless it's the opium poppy that's important.

WINGATE: You say this as a man who has access to information I certainly don't about Laos from your CIA work.

MARCHETTI: Well, yes, but I think if one would do any research on Laos or read deeply in the subject one would find out that most people feel that the socio-cultural developments occurring there are leading to an eventual socialistic-type government, perhaps something like exists in North Vietnam. The CIA with the help of the military, with the support of certain other individuals around town, ten years now has been fighting a war there, a private war to prevent this from happening at a great cost of money to the American people...

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WINGATE: How much?

MARCHETTI: About 450 million dollars a year. That's an awful lot of money. You can reform -- you can improve certain prisons with that money quite easily. But in any case, this leads me into the economic issue as well. There's too much money being spent on Intelligence.

WINGATE: Yet you say we must have Intelligence or spies, which is what they are.

MARCHETTI: Yes, exactly. I'm just saying that there are certain kinds of...

WINGATE: You're saying, "Run it right."

MARCHETTI: Run it right, and don't get involved in certain kinds of activities.

WINGATE: What kinds of activities?

MARCHETTI: Like this Laotian affair. There's no need for the CIA to go in there and fight a private war to save this little piece of jungle real estate.

WINGATE: But would you continue to have CIA operations to keep an eye on Russia and China?

MARCHETTI: Absolutely.

WINGATE: And the Middle East?

MARCHETTI: Yes.

WINGATE: You would have your spies there. Let's call it what it is.

MARCHETTI: That's right. I think we need spies. The government must know what's going on in these other countries and what the people are thinking. But they need not leap in clandestinely and support every dictator or oligarchy that exists.

WINGATE: Victor Marchetti, for fourteen years with the CIA, tells of spy operations and black espionage in his novel "The Rope Dancer", published by Grosset and Dunlap. Why did you quit it? Were they down on you?

MARCHETTI: No. Well, they...

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WINGATE: Did they know you were going to write a book?

MARCHETTI: No. My last few assignments were all very good assignments, as you can tell from what I've told you earlier. I think it was my final efficiency report on which I had gotten an outstanding rating, which is the highest you can get. The comment was made that I was destined with further development to become one of the managers of the agency. What they didn't know was that in my own mind I was gradually growing very frustrated and very much disenchanted with the waste and the inefficiency and the redundancy, with the military influence, which the agency could do very little about.

WINGATE: Why?

MARCHETTI: Because of the six billion dollars that go into Intelligence every year, something over five billion are actually controlled by the Secretary of Defense. He is actually the final authority for approval of operations and funding for the national security -- the Defense Intelligence Agency and all of the other military Intelligence services. The CIA is actually a small part of the Intelligence community. It is the most glamorous and certainly the best of all the agencies. But because of this tremendous pressure on them, people in the agency, perhaps unconsciously, have at times begun to undertake operations such as Laos, preparations for possible...

WINGATE: Why did they undertake them?

MARCHETTI: Well, I'm getting to this. In Thailand, in these areas, because they know this is what the military wants to do, and the military cannot come in and fight it openly and will support CIA in a clandestine effort.

WINGATE: Are you saying -- I want not to put words in your mouth -- that the agency should be more autonomous, less bureaucratic, and that the spying should be done where you think it counts? And you think it doesn't mean anything in Laos.

MARCHETTI: No to the first one, yes to the other two. I don't think the agency should be more autonomous in the sense that it would be free to do whatever it wanted to. I think the agency needs to be tightly controlled and given very specific direction not just from the White House but from a broader base, including more responsible Congressional members. But I do think that the agency should have, if not complete control of Intelligence, virtually complete control of Intelligence so that the work that will be done will be objective and unbiased and can be used by anyone and not influenced by people who have axes to grind like the military.

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WINGATE: Victor Marchetti -- quick question. Does the CIA or, to your knowledge, the FBI, ever try to get something on a critic such as Senator Fulbright?

MARCHETTI: No. Not the CIA.

WINGATE: Why did you hesitate when you said that?

MARCHETTI: Well, I was thinking of the various press comments that have been made from time to time about the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover. But I don't know any really...

WINGATE: Does the CIA keep a dossier on the President, whoever he is?

MARCHETTI: Not to my knowledge.

WINGATE: Would you know? Would you have known, as close as you were to the top?

MARCHETTI: It is possible I would have known, but counter-Intelligence matters such as this that you are now touching on and that I discuss in my book, "The Rope Dancer", are very, very sensitive and handled very, very...

WINGATE: Does the CIA keep a dossier on Kosygin of Russia?

MARCHETTI: Yes.

WINGATE: It does.

MARCHETTI: Yes.

WINGATE: On Chou En-lai?

MARCHETTI: Yes, on all foreign leaders.

WINGATE: Does it keep one on Golda Meir of Israel?

MARCHETTI: I would think so.

WINGATE: The Arab leaders?

MARCHETTI: Yes,

WINGATE: Who can get to these reports?

MARCHETTI: These are operated on a need-to-know -- controlled on a need-to-know basis. If one is working on, say, the Arabic problem, has a justifiable need to see all the Intelligence available on the subject, he can see them. However, if you were working on, say, Brazil they would not -- these reports would not be shown to you.
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WINGATE: Guest -- Victor Marchetti, who was for fourteen years with the CIA, serving three of those years in the executive suite right next to the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. And he tells about espionage in his new book "The Rope Dancer". Thanks for coming by, Victor.

MARCHETTI: Thank you very much.

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REVIEW OF "THE ROPE DANCER"

JOHN WINGATE: Critic-at-large Sandy Lesberg is here, and he's reviewing a book, I should point out to you, by a man who between 3:30 and 4:00 today was my first long interview guest -- Victor Marquetti, who, for 14 years, three of them as a top-ranking officer, was with the Central Intelligence Agency. He believes in a spy system, he told me, but thinks we run it in a very, very bad way. He was my guest this afternoon. Enough said. Here is Sandy Lesberg.

SANDY LESBERG: His book, Victor Marquetti's book, is called "The Rope Dancer." It's the story of an intelligence officer who defects to the Russians, and then the ultimate discovery by him that his superior in the department is also a Russian spy. It's sort of a frightening Alice-in-Wonderland concept-- the entire central core of our government's intelligence system all gone rotten. What makes it more exciting, John, is the fact-- as everyone knows who was listening to you earlier--the office for real, like you say, a man from the inside, so to speak. It sort of puts an aura of possibility, if not authenticity, on his novel.

The most fascinating parts of the book are the relationships with the Russian espionage people -- that love-hate -- intensely personal encounters that personalize the aloneness of any spy who walks into the other guy's camp. And, of course, the almost suicidal path the protagonist plunges down. In the end, what he knew all along, would be his death.

"The Rope Dancer" is a very tricky spy story. It stands as sort of an effervescent American answer to the super-cool British kind of thing, like "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold" and that sort of thing. Here's a guy of intellectual commitment to his own downfall, and a very strange and emotional commitment to these new-found friends of his on the other side, who he knows

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are gonna kill him eventually. It's an intriguing book. I've seen more, perhaps, professional books with regard to technique, but certainly not as one that--you know, if you believe this guy Marquetti, you'd say, "Yeah, he was on the inside," and you read where everybody in our own system is in the other camp -- well, I don't know where to go.

WINGATE: He was, for three years, in the executive office just outside the director of the CIA. He made one interesting point, Sandy. I asked him how much we pay our spies. He said, "From nothing, on up." He said that we recruit them for--we want them to feel ideologically--that's important.

LESBERG: Um-humm.

WINGATE: The Russians, he said, don't care so much about ideas. They will pay cold, hard money and cash to liquidate.

LESBERG: And did he indicate that there were instances, that he knew of, where a guy just walked in to the other camp like this?

WINGATE: Yes. I asked him how many spies we had, and he said "Who knows? Sometimes we don't know." (LAUGHS)

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